

Testimony of
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State of California
Little Hoover Commission

Public Hearing on the State's Capacity to Respond to Major Catastrophes
January 26, 2006

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Commission. I have been in emergency management for 15 years; at the State Office of Emergency Services (OES) for 11 and as Director of the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services for three and a half years. On January 6th, I left the County as the full time director and am currently contracted to the County to provide technical assistance during the transition to a new director. I have been asked to focus my comments on the following areas:

Organizational strategies. Emergency preparedness requires the integration and coordination of responsibilities across many state agencies and among state, federal and local partners.

What strengths and challenges do you see in the existing organizational design of the State's emergency preparedness responsibilities? What organizational strategies should the State pursue to improve emergency preparedness in California?

What does local government want from the State? Locals want leadership, guidance and a strong advocate for local government at the federal level.

The State has a long history of emergency management stemming from the 1950's when the Office of Civil Defense was created to address the cold war. It has evolved over the years to address natural as well as man-made disasters. While not all disasters are equal, most have the same consequences: deaths, injuries, property damage, displaced persons, etc. Therefore, a strength of the State is the 50+ years of experience in emergency preparedness and response under one State department. California's Master Mutual Aid Agreement signed in 1950 under Governor Earl Warren is the cornerstone of our response system and put California in the forefront of emergency management.

With the creation of the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) by executive order of Governor Davis, the State's emergency management system was bifurcated with OHS handling one specific threat and OES handling all other threats.

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In local emergency management, we address all threats. We do not separate out terrorism/homeland security. At a federal level this has been recognized with a change in Homeland Security funds for 2006. These funds can now be used for preparedness for any type of disaster and are not restricted to terrorism preparedness.

At the State level, the two principal departments local emergency managers interact with are State OES and OHS. State OES has been working with local government for 50+ years on planning and responding to all disasters. OHS, while a new agency, also works diligently on behalf of local government. While both of these agencies strive to do an excellent job, the bifurcation of duties does not work well for local government. We have been assured that turf issues at the State level between these two departments have been addressed and the department directors meet on a regular basis. However, local emergency management offices are quite small and we are often asked by OES and/or OHS to provide products and/or information with very tight timeframes. It is evident that these two agencies are not always aware of the workload each is placing on local government. For example, simple administrative issues such as each agency requiring a copy of the County's signatory authority or Board Resolution when one copy should suffice.

A significant portion of grant funds can be used for an exercise program. We believe exercising and training are the best methods to assure readiness for disaster response. California OES has one of the premier training departments, the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI). Locals assumed training and exercise funding would be used to enhance services provided by CSTI. However, federal exercise funds were directed to the California National Guard (CNG) which further fragmented the emergency management system at the State level. Again, there are examples of CNG and OES or OHS scheduling meetings/conferences on the same dates when at the local level, we would send the same person to both events.

Planning, training, exercising and equipping are all pieces of the same pie regardless of the hazard. When those slices are assigned to three different State agencies, a coherent approach to emergency response is compromised. Ideally, one State agency should handle all threats and all phases of emergency management. Emergency management requires a wholistic approach either at a Cabinet level or fully under one State agency. This does not preclude the role of other State agencies such as the Department of Social Services for care and shelter and I will address that issue in the next section.

As far as advocacy, local governments as well as the State have been buffeted by ever changing winds at the federal level. Each year the Homeland Security funds have different criteria and requirements, short deadlines and extensions that are sometimes granted months after the grant is over. For 2006 UASI funding, San Diego, despite hosting the busiest international border; a large military presence; a myriad of high tech and biotech companies; a nuclear power plant and nuclear powered vessels, is no longer considered an urban area with adequate threats to make the list of top 35 cities. However,

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Minneapolis/St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio and Kansas City are somehow hotbeds of terrorism and are considered to have more threats than San Diego. We need the State to advocate on our behalf and I believe that to some extent the State is advocating for California communities. Locals would like to work with the State to lobby the federal government and show that we are a strong team.

Another example of advocacy locals would like the State to adopt is a subject this Commission has previously heard testimony on: the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The public has the expectation that they will be warned of impending emergencies. For years they have heard the EAS tones and been told that if this were a real emergency, they would be provided with information. However, not only is the technology hopelessly outdated but local broadcasters are only required to transmit messages from the President of the United States. The transmission by broadcasters of messages generated by local emergency management offices are voluntary. Broadcasters lose advertising time when they broadcast EAS messages. Until the federal government makes all EAS messages mandatory and improves the technology, our residents will continue to have very unrealistic expectations.

Chain of command. A robust emergency preparedness strategy must be integrated into the day-to-day functioning of dozens of state agencies, many of which do not have emergency preparedness as their core responsibility.

What challenges does California currently face with regard to integrating emergency preparedness efforts across executive branch agencies, particularly agencies which have a core mission other than emergency response? How should California organize its chain of command to provide sufficient authority to support emergency preparedness throughout the executive branch while recognizing competing needs for authority?

California's chain of command is clearly articulated in the Emergency Services Act which allows the Governor to assign all or part of his duties to the Office of Emergency Services. However, the planning for and response to disasters takes the effort of many State departments. This is true at the city and county level as well. In San Diego County, I must rely on several other departments to develop the County's emergency plan, staff the Emergency Operations Center, perform flood fights, provide medical services, etc. Because the Chief Administrative Officer of the County has clearly articulated to all county departments that emergency planning and response are of the highest priority, I receive the full cooperation and top notch staff from all county departments, not only in times of disaster but in planning, training and exercising.

The State however, is a much more vast bureaucracy. What is the incentive for a department to provide staff time and resources to State OES for work that is clearly outside the department's stated mission? That incentive has to come from the top via policies or direction such as an executive order. I would suggest that the State look at the matrix of responsibilities in the State Emergency Plan (copy attached). For each State department that has a lead role in response (ex: Department of Social Services is the

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primary for care and shelter), that department should designate a staff person at a certain level, as an example, a Staff Services Manager II with a unit of staff. If a department is small and has only a support role, it might designate an Associate Analyst. What is critical is that staff designated are highly competent and knowledgeable and available to State OES on a regular basis for training, exercising and information sharing. The chain of command for those designated should include OES in a supervisory role to ensure accountability to the emergency preparedness and response mission.

Management strategies. In addition to organizational strategies, what management strategies must be part of the State's emergency preparedness effort – for example, ensuring a sufficient number of emergency preparedness professionals or utilizing performance measures to monitor quality? What models might the State look to for managerial excellence in emergency preparedness?

In June of 2005 your Commission issued “[Serving the Public: Managing the State Workforce to Improve Outcomes](#)” about California's management workforce. The executive summary stated in part “... the State does little to attract, develop and deploy the management talent needed to effectively lead essential public programs.” I spent 25 years in State service and your report hit the nail on the head. Issues with the executive team at the State level are not unique to any one department. The entire system needs an overhaul. There is little incentive to be an executive in State service. Salaries and benefits for executives are well below most local government. This isn't true at the staff level.

When I was an Emergency Services Coordinator (ESC) at State OES I served as a Duty Officer. This is where you are on call 24/7 for any emergency. I was compensated one hour of compensatory time off (CTO) for every 16 hours (outside of regular work time) that I was on call. After my one week Duty Officer stint, I had earned 8 hours of CTO and any overtime worked if emergencies occurred. Through collective bargaining, stand- by pay went from 1 for 16 to 1 for 8 and is now 1 for 4. That means, an ESC that serves as Duty Officer for a week and never gets a call earns 32 hours compensatory time off. If he serves duty 10 times a year (it can be more or less), he has earned 320 hours of CTO or 8 weeks of time off. Due to the bargaining unit limits of CTO that can be carried, often times this must be compensated in cash. The Program Manager I at a Regional office who supervises ESCs and Sr. ESCs is also expected to be on call 24/7 at all times not just in weekly rotations. However, there is no compensation for being on call at the manager level. The Program Manager's salary is 4% higher than the Sr. ESC. If you do the math, there's no mystery why the State would have a hard time attracting talented executives.

Another area we all need to advocate for is the promotion of Emergency Management as a profession. Our country has made huge investments in Public Safety in terms of law enforcement, fire and rescue and hazmat. But we have failed to adequately fund emergency management. Emergency Management is the discipline that coordinates the

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response, the glue that binds if you will. We are the discipline that makes sure plans are in place and that responders exercise and train to the plans. Emergency Management makes sure everyone is communicating and acting in unison. At the local level, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit into the field. People see horror stories on television and shy away from the responsibility. We need to have recognition of the profession at the federal and state level and incentives for colleges and universities to offer degree programs.

A Model for the State to Consider

I believe the County of San Diego provides a model for managerial excellence. The County uses a continuous cycle of planning, implementing plans, monitoring implementation and re-evaluating and renewing the planning process. The County's comprehensive guide for managing the cyclic process is the General Management System (GMS). The GMS begins with a five-year Strategic Plan followed by short term yearly Operational Plans. Monitoring and control take place throughout the year and evaluation mechanisms ensure goals are monitored, plans followed and risks identified.

County executives are expected to engage heavily in Functional Threading which means that we tap into the talent pool to identify and tackle issues that are common to more than one department. A recent example of threading in my own department is a document we developed for the pandemic flu. The County Health department had developed a comprehensive and detailed plan for the pandemic flu. However, the plan addresses their actions in response to this health emergency and does not clearly define the roles and responsibilities of other departments such as the Sheriff for quarantine enforcement, the County Vet for animal testing or OES for activating and directing the Emergency Operations Center. County OES staff led an effort to develop a Concept of Operations that describes how the County as a whole will respond should a pandemic occur. Several departments served on the committee and the final product is a County document with ownership by all. This is that wholistic approach to emergency management that is needed at all levels.

The County is financially stable and never waivers in its commitment to employee development. As a new County employee, I was very impressed with the training opportunities available: there is an Administrative Support academy for clerical staff, a Supervisory Academy and a new Dynamic Management Academy to develop leadership. Training and continuous improvement are highly valued and I believe this has added to the superior level of professionalism I found in San Diego County. Department heads are given great autonomy and expected to perform with a high level of accountability. I have seen how government can work and I would encourage to the State to take a good look at the General Management System and determine how a similar system could be initiated at the State level.

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State Emergency Plan

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PART TWO Attachment A

STATE AGENCY EMERGENCY RESPONSE ROLES

	Department of Administration	Department of Health	Department of Labor	Department of Natural Resources	Department of Public Safety	Department of Social Services	Department of Transportation	Department of Water Resources	Department of Wildlife Conservation	Department of Youth Services
Emergency Management										
Emergency Planning										
Emergency Response										
Emergency Recovery										
Emergency Preparedness										
Emergency Training										
Emergency Exercises										
Emergency Communications										
Emergency Logistics										
Emergency Medical Services										
Emergency Mental Health										
Emergency Public Information										
Emergency Shelter										
Emergency Transportation										
Emergency Utilities										
Emergency Food and Nutrition										
Emergency Housing										
Emergency Social Services										
Emergency Youth Services										
Emergency Facilities										
Emergency Personnel										
Emergency Purchasing										
Emergency Resources										
Emergency Transportation										
FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION										
Finance/Administration										

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State Emergency Plan

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PART TWO Attachment B

STATE AGENCY EMERGENCY RECOVERY ROLES													
	Corps				Development								Develop
	US Army Corps of Engineers	US Forest Service	US Fish & Wildlife Service	US Geological Survey	US National Park Service	US National Aeronautics and Space Administration	US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	US National Science Foundation	US National Security Agency	US National Intelligence Community	US National Nuclear Security Administration	US National Transportation Safety Board	US National Weather Service
Emergency Management													
Disaster													
Public Information													
Emergency Response													
Recovery													
Transportation													
Public Assistance													
Technical Assistance													
Logistics													
Communication/Coordination													
Cost Accounting													
Public													
Personnel													
Operations													
Coordination													
State/Catastrophe Response													
Compensation													
Recovery													

